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# Crim 321: Qualitative Research Methods

## Study Questions for Hennink et al / Chapter 5

### Ethical Issues in Qualitative Research

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*For starters, I will remind you that the two main authors of the text – Hennink and Hutter -- are European, and so you should not be surprised that the articulation of ethics and ethics regulation they talk about reflects the European context. Accordingly, while the ethical principles they talk about are fairly robust and recognized across a wide array of countries and academic disciplines, the legal context and regulatory frameworks in and under which researchers operate vary considerably from country to country. In Canada, university researchers are governed by the laws of Canada, a federal code of ethics known as the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (usually abbreviated as the TCPS), their disciplinary codes, and their personal codes of ethics. Accordingly, the comments and questions listed below will highlight areas of difference between Europe and Canada where appropriate.*

1. You should ensure you understand the following ethical principles that are introduced in the text: anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, minimization of harm, self-determination, conflict of interest.
2. The authors suggest that, “ethical challenges in qualitative research may be more pronounced” than in other forms of research. In what ways? Why?
3. What kinds of ethical issues arise when it comes to recruiting participants for research?
4. What ethical issues arise with respect to snowball sampling (this is where you ask someone who participates in your research to identify other individuals they know who also meet the criteria for inclusion in the study)? What would be an ethical procedure to follow?
5. If a gatekeeper decides to give you access to a study population, does that commit the members of the population to taking part in your research? What would be an ethical procedure to follow? Conversely, if a gatekeeper refuses you access, does that preclude people who are members of that population from participating? What would be an ethical procedure to follow? (Please note that the answer to the second question is different in Canada under the TCPS than it was for the authors with the research in India they describe on pp.76-77, as will be discussed in class.)
6. You get to the point of coming face to face with someone you hope will participate in your study. Although each project may trigger unique requirements because of the topic you are researching or the prospective participants involved, what sorts of basic information about the study and its procedures should you pretty much always be ready to share in the process of obtaining someone’s consent to participate?

7. Should you *always* get participants' signatures on a document that confirms their consent to participate? Why or why not? Should you *ever* get their signature? Why or why not?
8. Distinguish "anonymity" and "confidentiality."
9. What are some procedures you can incorporate into your research to ensure that participant confidentiality is protected?
10. Research in Criminology often involves asking people to share information with us about things they have done that are not pretty and could bring harm to them if it was disclosed along with their names – being humiliated, disciplined, fired, or incarcerated. In that regard, the text says, "In general, researchers are required to break the confidentiality agreement if they learn that the study participant has committed a crime, is about to commit a crime, has been a victim of crime or plans to harm themselves" (p.81). That is not the case in Canada, as we will discuss in class.
11. Should you pay or not pay participants for their participation? What are some of the ethical issues the text identifies in that regard?
12. In Criminology we are often talking to people about very sensitive issues that involve loss and grief, such as being a victim of crime or losing a loved one. Are there benefits to people who participate in this type of research? Are there possible harms that one should prepare for? What are some ways you might do so?
13. Let's say that you have conducted interviews with people in the North Vancouver detachment of the RCMP about the relations they have with the [Skwxú7mesh](#) and [Tsleil-Waututh](#) people who live on the north shore. You sit down to transcribe the interviews and then set out to anonymize them so that you can live up to the promise of confidentiality that you made to your participants. Have you done your job if you go through and assign pseudonyms to any participants and the people and places they refer to in their interviews?
14. Regarding the principle of "beneficence," what are some of the ways that your text suggests you can give back to the people who participated in your research? Are there any other ways you can suggest that might be done?